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A

PASTORAL LETTER

ADDRESSED

TO THE CLERGY AND LAITY OF THE
DIOCESS OF ARICHAT.

BY

BY THE RIGHT REV. DR. M'KINNON,

BISHOP OF ARICHAT.

"Obey your Prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch, as being to render an account of your Souls: that they may do this with joy, and not with grief."—HEBREWS XIII. 17.

HALIFAX:

ENGLISH & BLACKADAR, BARRINGTON STREET.

1852.

RASTORAL LETTER

ADDRESS

TO THE FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF THE

DEPARTED

BY THE REV. J. W. RASTORAL

DEPARTED

On the 1st of March, 1861, at the age of 70 years, after a long and painful illness, departed this life, a devoted friend and a faithful minister of the Gospel. He was born in the town of ... and was educated at the ...

W. RASTORAL

NEW YORK: ...

1861



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COLIN FRANCIS M'KINNON,

*By the Grace of God, and the favour of the Apostolic
See, Bishop of Arichat.*

To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Arichat.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN:—

You are well aware that for several months past the See of Arichat has been vacant, in consequence of the lamented demise of our late Chief Pastor, the Right Rev. Dr. William Fraser, whom after a long and laborious career amongst us in the arduous duties of the Episcopacy, our Lord has been pleased to remove from the trials and vicissitudes of this world, to enjoy, as we humbly hope, in another life, those glorious rewards which the great High Priest of our Souls has promised all his faithful Servants. When the news of this melancholy event had reached the Eternal City, the Successor of Peter, on whom rests the solicitude of all the Churches, resolved to provide without delay for the desolate condition of our widowed Diocese. His choice has fallen upon us, and, O formidable burthen! he has imposed upon our shoulders the momentous obligation of supplying the place of him who had been for so many years our Spiritual and venerable Father. In obedience to the Holy See, and by virtue of a Brief given, under the Fisherman's ring on the XXI November last, we have received the plenitude of the Priesthood, and the awful and sublime dignity which has elevated our unworthiness to the succession of the Apostles.

And when we reflect, dearly beloved brethren, on the position in which we now stand, on the high eminence to which we have been raised, on the solemn obligations which we have contracted before God and his Holy Church, and on the untiring vigilance with which we are now bound

to "watch as having to render an account of your Souls," we are, we sincerely acknowledge, filled with apprehension and alarm. Our only consolation is, that this eminent and dangerous post is not of our own seeking, and that if God has called us to this high office, we have reason to hope he will in his infinite mercy vouchsafe to sustain us, and grant us grace, courage, and perseverance, to fulfil the great duties of our ministry. We are likewise comforted when we remember that it has often pleased Our Heavenly Father to choose the weak things of this world to confound the strong, and the things that are not, to confound the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his sight.

Dearly Beloved Brethren, we all have a common end; we are created to love and serve Our Lord and Creator in this life, and afterwards to be happy with him in the next. When man had fallen from this end, and had, fatally, prevaricated from his original justice, it pleased the Creator to have pity on the work of his own hands. He therefore promised a Redeemer. In the plenitude of time, this promised Deliverer came. Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, true God and true Man, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the prophecies of old, appeared on earth, and became the great Teacher, Legislator, and Saviour of mankind. Among all his disciples he chose twelve whom he called Apostles, and among those twelve he particularly designated one whom he called Cephas, that is, Peter, or Rock. He moreover declared that upon that Rock, viz, Cephas, he would build his Church, and that the gates of Hell should not prevail against it(1). He founded this Church, his Spiritual Kingdom, on earth, and defined its constitution. After having, for years, amidst pains, difficulties, and persecutions, preached his heavenly doctrine, and announced the glad tidings of the Gospel, and, after having proved by miracles the divinity of his great mission, he delivered himself into the hands of his enemies, and was crucified to save and redeem mankind. After his glorious resurrection, he appeared to his Apostles, and gave them the grand commission to go and announce the Gospel to all Nations. "All power," says the Lord, "is given to me in heaven and on earth; going therefore,

(1) St. Mat. xvi. 18.

teach ye all nations : baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (2). In virtue of this commission, the Apostles, and their successors in the ministry, became the heavenly constituted Teachers of mankind. All nations were called to enter into the Church of the living God, who "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth" (3). On the great day of Pentecost, in accordance with this infallible promise of their divine master, the Apostles received the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghosts. They were at once enabled to begin the great work to which they were called, viz., to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to establish his Spiritual Kingdom, the Church, among the nations of the earth. The great flock of Jesus Christ thus became necessarily divided into two bodies,—the teaching body of the Pastors, and the great body of the faithful to be taught. As the sacred order of the Priesthood established by Jesus Christ, and conferred by him upon the Apostles, naturally, forming a line of characteristic demarcation between the Sacramentally ordained Minister of the Gospel, and his flock, is to continue to the end of time in the Church of the Living God, so the original relations, between Pastor and flock, shall also continue. According as the confines of the infant Church of God became extended, it was necessary to appoint chief and secondary Pastors to preach the Gospel of Christ, and administer the sacred rites of his Church. Thus, as the nations became converted, new dioceses were formed, new Bishops and Priests were ordained for the Spiritual guidance of the increasing faithful, as St. Paul says, "For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ, that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive" (4). Thus, the great

(2) St. Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. (3) 1 Tim. ii. 4. (4) Eph. iv. 12, 13, 14.

commission, originally, given by Christ to his Apostles, has been, in this manner, fulfilled from the beginning. From age to age the great moral chain of Teachers,—the Apostles forming its first links,—is extended unto us. The constitution once laid down by the Divine Founder of the Church is never to be changed. The centre of authority being once established in the Chair of Peter, harmony of action, and unity of faith, are at once secured through the widely-extended ramifications of the Christian Hierarchy throughout the world.

Called by the Most High, Beloved Brethren, to the office of a Bishop in the Church, and in virtue of our communion with the Chair of Peter, partaking of the divine commission delivered by our Lord to his Apostles, whereby we possess power, and authority to rule, and govern the portion of the great flock that has been intrusted to our care, we with confidence appeal to you, Beloved Brethren of the Clergy, our fellow labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, to co-operate with us in the great work which is set before us.

We would remind you therefore, Beloved Brethren, in the first place, that our own sanctification ought to be the thought next to our heart; for, what would it avail us to gain the whole world, were we, in the end, to lose our own souls? The order of true charity requires that, of our own souls, we ought to have the first and principal care. It is most true, that by the due fulfilment of our sacred obligations toward the flocks committed to our charge, we ensure our own salvation. The Apostle, instructing his beloved disciple Timothy, says, "Take heed to thyself, and to doctrine, be earnest in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (5)

Dearly Beloved Brethren, great is the dignity to which we have been raised, when it pleased the Almighty to call us into the Sanctuary, and place us Pastors over his people. The responsibilities attending our sacred office are numerous and formidable. To speak again with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "In us God has placed the word of reconciliation, for Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us." (6) You therefore, as

(5) 1 Tim. iv. 16. (6) Tib. ii. 7. 8.

Priests of the Most High, and as Ministers of Jesus Christ, we would charge "in all things to show yourselves examples of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity, the sound word that cannot be blamed, that he who is on the contrary part, may be afraid, having no evil to say of us." (7) And as the Blessed Peter admonishes us, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God, not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily." (8)

Dearly Beloved Brethren, we are well aware that many difficulties must be encountered in the faithful discharge of the various duties of our sacred calling. But mark the great rewards that await the true Pastor. Hear the Prince of the Apostles encouraging us in these consoling words, "And when the Prince of Pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory." (9) Besides, we know that "they who instruct many unto righteousness shall shine as stars for ever and ever." (10) Animated by the remembrance of the great rewards that are waiting for us in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father, and calling to mind the words of the Apostle to the Romans, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (11), the manifold troubles of our situation, the trying disappointments we shall meet with, the persecutions we have to suffer, in the service of our Lord, will appear to us a light burthen.

After the example of Godliness, which we are bound to exhibit in our lives for the edification of our people, as our Heavenly master warns us, "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (12), we are strictly obliged, to instruct our respective flocks, by the preaching of the sacred word of God. Oral preaching was the great means by which the faith of Jesus Christ has been propagated throughout the world: and the same great means is not less necessary for its preservation, than it has been for its propagation. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." (13.) Hence we have the emphatic words

(7) 11 Pet. v. 2. (8) v. 4. (9) Dan. xii. 13 (10) viii. 13.

(11) Mat. v. 16. (12) Rom. x. 17. (13) 11 Tim. iv. 2.

of St. Paul to Timothy, "Preach the word ; be instant, in season, out of season ; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience, and doctrine." (14.) God Almighty, in ancient times, declared by the mouth of his Prophet, "The lips of the Priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth." (15.) St. Paul describing the requirements of a Chief Pastor, says : "He ought to be able to exhort in sound doctrine and convince the gain-sayers." The great duty, therefore, of instructing others, imposes on us all the imperative obligation of attending to the study of the word of God ; for without a continued and serious application to the study of the great Truths and maxims of faith, and morality contained in the Sacred Scriptures, it will be impossible for us, Dearly Beloved Brethren, to "exhort in sound doctrine, and convince the gain-sayers," by giving reason of our Holy Belief. We would, finally, point out to you, Dearly Beloved Brethren, the obligation of praying, most fervently, to the Lord, to send pious and learned labourers into his vineyard ; for we may well say with our heavenly Master, "The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few." (16.)

Dearly Beloved Children of the Laity, we would remind you of your obligations to contribute to the necessary and decent support of your Pastors. For the Lord has ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel." (17.) Besides, we have in the words of St. Paul to Timothy, "Let the Priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour, especially, they who labour in the word and doctrine." We exhort you, therefore, Beloved Children, in the words of the same great Apostle, "Obey your Prelates, and be subject to them ; for they watch, as being to render an account of your souls." (18.) We would likewise, most seriously, admonish you all, of the absolute necessity by which we are bound to ensure our final end, the Salvation of our immortal souls, by fulfilling the holy will of our Creator. To obtain this great end we believe true Faith to be necessary. The Lord himself has declared "He that believeth not shall be condemned." (19.) And his blessed Apostle has said that "without Faith it is im-

(14) Mat. ii. 7.

(15) Luke x. 2.

(16) 1 Cor. ix. 14.

(17) Heb. xiii. 17.

(18) M. xvi. 16. (19) Heb. xi. 6.

possible to please God.” (20) But, Dearly Beloved Brethren, as you well know, it would be an error to say that Faith alone can save us. As Christians, we are bound to be fruitful in every good work ; besides we are taught that “ Faith without works is dead, and by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (21) On this account the Blessed Peter addressing the first Believers of the Christian Church, says : “ Wherefore, Brethren, labour the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.” Finally, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as we read (Mat. xxv. 23) in the clearest terms, shows the magnificent reward that is promised to the performance of good works. “ Come ye Blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ; for, I was hungry, and you gave me to eat ; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink ; I was a stranger, and you took me in.” The only Faith, therefore, that can lead us to eternal Salvation is that practical one that worketh by charity. Gal. v. 6. This has been the doctrine of the Catholic Church from her first establishment : it shall continue till the end of time ; for it is based upon the eternal truth of God’s infallible word.

Beloved Brethren of the Clergy, Dear Children of the Laity, we need not remind you, for you are well aware of it, how destitute we are of the means requisite to meet the many wants of our poor, and recently—founded diocese. But, trusting in the aid of Heaven, and your valuable co-operation, we confidently, hope to be able, by degrees, to bring into existence, those Institutions which every well regulated diocese requires, and which invariably attend the progress of our holy Religion throughout the world. A diocesan seminary, even on a small scale, is among the first cares of a Bishop : consequently it will receive our earliest, and most serious attention. According, as our means will allow us, other institutions shall be founded for the education of the rising generation, to correspond with the requirements, and progress of the age in which we live. To bring about the necessary reforms, and renewal of spirit, in accordance with our holy vocation, those great means that have proved so efficacious in restoring piety, and zeal, among Clergy and Laity, in other countries, such as holy retreats,

(20) Jam. ii. 24, 26. (21) 11 Pet. i. 10.

shall, with the help of God, be established among us. To accomplish these designs, so beneficial in themselves, and, as we hope, conducive to the Glory of God, we shall, early, next summer, take possession of the See to which we have been called : from which, as from a common centre, the necessary directions shall emanate for the promotion of God's glory, and the Salvation of the souls intrusted to our care.

Dearly Beloved Brethren, we have already entered into the holy Season of Lent. The forty days preceding Easter or the great festival of the resurrection of the Lord, have been from the establishment of the Church considered, by the Christian world, as a time peculiarly consecrated to the works of Christian penance. The Church of God during this holy season of Lent brings before us in a particular manner, the life and passion of the Son of God. She explains to us how we have been redeemed through the dolorous passion of Jesus Christ ; how our ransom has been paid, and the hand writing against us has been nailed to the Cross. Through the passion and death of Jesus Christ we are restored to our lost inheritance ; the gates of heaven have been opened unto us. Through the Sacrament of regeneration, the laver of baptism—we are actually put in possession (as far as it is consistent with our state of probation here below) of the great blessings acquired for mankind by the passion of the Redeemer : Original Sin is forgiven us, in a word we are made the adopted sons of God.

Dearly Beloved Brethren we all—there may be a few exceptions—received those great blessings in our infancy. Born of Christian parents their first care was to see us regenerated in the holy waters of Baptism ; for, instructed by the living voice of the Church, they knew well that until “born again of water and the Holy Ghost, their children could not enter into the Kingdom of God.”

But, Dearly Beloved Brethren, have we all maintained this baptismal innocence ? Has the white robe which the Priest of God then laid over us in sign of our innocence, been preserved pure and undefiled from actual sin ? Let us not deceive ourselves in an affair of such vital importance as the salvation of our immortal souls. We have sinned. The path of baptismal innocence can no more lead us into our promised inheritance. The only way that can bring us to

Heaven, as we are situated, is the rugged path of a penitential life. The Lord himself has issued the mandate, "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish."—Lu. xiii. 5. When the christian soul has fallen from God, by wilful sin, and has thus forfeited its right to Heaven, Penance is the only means left to regain the lost favour of God. This is the only plank that can save the soul after the shipwreck of its baptismal innocence. To this great and necessary work we are called at this Holy Season by the voice of the church. To humble our pride, and to bring us to a due sense of the meanness of our origin, She, on the first day of this Penitential Season, laid ashes on our heads, saying to each of us, "Remember man thou art but dust, and into dust thou shalt return." Sackcloth and ashes are emblems of contrition and humility. The Ninivites, by fasting in sackcloth and ashes, found mercy before the Lord. The Christian Church, Beloved Brethren, in the beginning of this holy season, addresses us in the words of the Prophet Joel, "Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning: and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God." Fasting, almsdeeds, and prayers, according to each one's ability, are the great means that we are required, during this holy season, to use in our spiritual warfare against our mortal enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. By fasting we overcome the lust of the flesh, by almsdeeds we subdue the lust of the eye, and by the powerful weapon of fervent prayer we conquer the pride of life, and put to flight the arch enemy of our souls.

Let us not forget that the great, and most necessary fast, is to abstain from sin. This fast is incumbent on all, and all, whether young or old, in health or in sickness, aided by the grace of God, can observe it. To fast from corporeal food, and not to fast from sin, would be a gross delusion. If then we would fast as we ought to do, "Let the wicked man forsake his ways, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him."—Isai. lv. 7.

To fast according to the discipline of the Church in our days implies, first, to abstain from flesh meat on fast days: secondly, to eat but one full meal in the day: and thirdly,

we are not to take this full meal till about noon. Owing to the poverty of the times, and the necessities of our people, we judge proper before God, to grant the following general dispensation, by virtue of powers received from the Holy See. With the exception of the first and last week of Lent, we dispense with the law of abstinence from flesh meat on all Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Persons who are able to fast, and would use the dispensation now granted, cannot use flesh meat but once in the day, at dinner only.

Alas, how much have we departed from the rigorous discipline of ancient days! Our Lent is but a shadow, compared with the stern reality of the primitive days of the Church. Still, let us hope, that provided we have the spirit of those happy times, though owing to our circumstances we cannot, but at a great distance, follow the perfection of their works, the Lord in his mercy will pity us, and take our good will for the deeds we would, if otherwise situated, perform.

We finally place ourselves and our Diocese under the patronage of the Mother of God, the BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS, and REFUGE OF SINNERS.

This our first Pastoral Letter is to be read in all the Churches and Chapels wherein Divine Service is publicly celebrated, the first Sunday after its reception.

“The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit, Brethren. Amen.”

✠ COLIN FRANCIS MCKINNON,
BISHOP OF ARICHAT.

Given at St. Mary's, Halifax, on }
the very day of our Consecration. }
Feast of St. Mathias, 1852. }